

1. Advent Fox (2019)

You were waiting for something, curled quiet
on your side, just above the river's tideline.

Had lain down there alone and then
waited so long the dry winter grass tangled
your bones and you were hard to prise away

from the earth, your natural grave, which I did
anyway. The lines of your sinews not
yet unknotted by the slow mouths of beetles.

We had to speed things along with
violence, then long warm baths
of hydrogen peroxide and bleach, and even then

we had to wait forever while your stubborn cords dissolved

until you were transformed to
this glorious gleaming skull.

2. All Souls Day

(revised 2022)

for the young man whose body was found at the river's edge on November 2, 2017

Soon my body becomes my boat,
my wake undone on the water

and I more water than air
tide-borne below the great bridge

as the nets of my eyes unravel.
Bright falls on breaking shadow.

The stutter-thrum pulse of the world
beats on across the great bridge.

My boat unwinds, rivet, rib, seam,
and creatures of the mire – common,

unloved, dark dwelling – draw near to sing
unshapen psalms in unknown tongues.

3. The Funambulist

(2022)

The best defense against woodchucks
isn't some straight-up wall, even
made of stone or brick. That's easy.

It's a wobbly fence, with a lot
of give, an old fishing net, say,
twisted from stake to stake. She'll try
to scale it but her hands are built
for digging, not this. Part way up
she feels her spine unbalance

waits, airborne, gravity distilled
in sequined fingertips, splayed
vertical – worse – angled out
her clever toes unsure
on braided polyethylene
high over the curve of the earth

and stares through filament at sky
she doesn't want to go to

while below lie
crackled shards of cherry
tomato, a mummified
eggplant, the stop-time motion of
the cabbage opening
and settling quiet into the dirt.

4. The Elements (2021)

From here I promise you will see it all --

those clusters of towers
their various diameters and heights
lifted into cloud-clotted sky

bespeckled by summer sun
grounded by a low plinth
composed of wide shallow domes

grounded by marshes clotted with nests and lairs
clusters of golden phragmites
rising up there

then water, lapping
where eels unscroll, abiding in the dark patches
on their way to the Sargasso Sea

not a sea as you'd imagine it, just
the ragged floating place they dream of --

a falling sequence of materials
from solid to liquid to gas, a game
of animal vegetable mineral --

old cast-iron composed of scraps of dying stars
grounded by a burning fall
torn caterwauling out of the ground

casting fire and steam into that floating sky
while within, the compression of life forms --
fern bones and beetle wings from long ago

transformed to gasoline and other gases, or lighter fuel
diesel laced with hydrogen, or propane --
gases, liquids, steam, fire -- fluid forms

in drifted tatters lapped by sky and water
smithereens unfurled, swarming
toward some remembered place.

from *Refinery* (winner of the 2021 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize), Broadkill River Press, 2021;
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5. After Peak Oil (November 20, 2009 - October 7, 2011)

(2019)

Then it sat abandoned empty still
unmoving remnant of the empire
that had reached its outer edges and slowed
and dried and crept back an inch from there.

Nothing flowed
but the air that floated
in and out in slow shallow
breaths after everything was

turned off. Its hollow
frame rusted and thinned. Delicate
patches of light spread
around bolts and crept along seams. Wasps

built nests in dark unswept places. Vines
climbed up. The chainlink border
was easily breached.
Lights burned out, and nobody

came to replace them. When the wind was
strong up the bay you could hear
the song of its brittle gray bones
singing.

from *Refinery* (Broadkill River Press, 2021); first appeared in *Delmarva Review*, 2020